



A Playground for Teachers

transformED reimagines the look, feel, and purpose of professional development for teachers.

Depending on the session, transformED can accommodate somewhere between 16 and 30 teachers and administrators. All sessions are currently at capacity.

Traditionally, professional development for educators has been in the form of lectures and presentations in a dimmed auditorium on mandatory in-service days. The sessions can feel perfunctory and not entirely relevant. In a word, they can be boring.

Responding to a call from teachers for more meaningful professional development, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), a local education service agency, created transformED, and in the process flipped professional development on its head. Through engaging, interactive, and creative sessions, teachers learn innovative instructional practices, explore these new teaching methods, play with new products, software, and tools they might use in their classrooms, and understand curricula. It's a space where teachers can engage with one another to learn how they might integrate novel teaching approaches into their classroom practice.

"We're not sitting people in rows. We really want to engage them in a fun, engaging way," says Rosanne Javorsky, Assistant Executive Director of Teaching & Learning at the AIU. "It's OK to make mistakes in here. It's OK to say, 'Hey,

BY THE NUMBERS

Teachers participating in transformED sessions come mainly from the 42 Allegheny County school districts as well as some charter schools and private schools.

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I don't know how to do this.' We want teachers to step outside their comfort zone. And we want to help them work through it."

Without motivated teachers, no technology breakthrough can deeply affect the academic journey of students in school. transformED has created the space for teachers to have the kind of professional development experience that ignites passion and curiosity, instead of stifling it.

transformED offers teachers opportunities to work with ed-tech tools like MaKey MaKey, Gigapan, 3-D Printers, and Hummingbird Robotics Kits. Session facilitators are not just expert teachers; often they are technologists, artists, and designers.

The boundaries between presenters and teachers quickly dissolve during interactive sessions.

"How do we create thinkers and learners, not just smart kids? We need a professional development space where teachers can keep pushing education forward."

ALISON FRANCIS, CREATIVITY & LITERACY PROGRAM FACILITATOR,
KERR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"It just happens," says Megan Cicconi, AIU's Director of Instructional Innovation, who works closely with teachers and trainers in transformED. "It's just a very collaborative space that lends itself to exploratory learning,"

During one workshop on "squishy circuits," participants took turns playing an interactive video game to cement circuitry principles. Then, they donned aprons and followed a recipe to make two types of Play-Doh: conductive and resistant, and eventually hooked their Play-Doh sculptures up to a battery pack and LED lights. The teachers discussed how students could use the salty, conductive Play-Doh to turn on the LEDs to learn how electricity flows.

Teachers leave transformED sessions more excited to use tech tools in their classrooms, and a community of practice—teachers, technologists, and administrators—to nurture that excitement.



NETWORK IN ACTION

CONVENE: IDEATION EVENTS GENERATE NEW IDEAS FOR NETWORK INITIATIVES.

Innovative professional development was a topic of discussion in the Remake Learning Network years before transformED first launched in February 2013. At Making Sparks 2010, a network event convening members to generate ideas for new projects, at least three discussion groups sketched plans for a 'digital playground for teachers.' Recognizing the growing demand among network members, regional funders enthusiastically support AIU's efforts to turn these ideas into reality with transformED.

COORDINATE: NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS CONNECT NETWORK MEMBERS TO UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES.

AIU uses transformED to host new professional development initiatives in coordination with national organizations like Common Sense Media, which hosts regular "Appy Hours" in the space for teachers to try the latest in educational software, and the Institute of Play, which hosts its annual TeacherQuest, helps dozens of Pittsburgh teachers design new games and game-like learning experiences.